



*Components of a Successful Faculty Advising Program: Institutional Commitment, Professional Development, Incentives and Recognition*

## **Discussion Ideas for Group Leaders**

How do faculty view their advising role at your institution? As course selection or registration facilitators? Or as mentors/teachers? Does your institution have a collective understanding and agreement of what advising is? Or what advising isn't? Your responses to these questions will inform the rest of your discussion about the best approach to developing and implementing an advisor development or training program.

Serving as the foundation for any program you develop will be your Advising Mission Statement which should flow naturally from your institution's mission statement. In the institutional statement you should find language that helps to establish learning goals for students and advising goals for your faculty. Begin to think about and develop your own Advising Mission Statement by pulling language from your institution's mission statement.

What key strategies could your institution, department, or unit employ to equip your faculty to be more effective advisors?

An advisor development program can be shaped for a department, a unit, division, a college, or for the entire institution. What would be the important common elements that all such programs share?

At institutions such as community colleges in which faculty are expected to teach five or more courses a semester, where the advising loads are very high, and where there are few expectations for a strong faculty research agenda, the advisor development or training program would have a very different needs and expectations from those of many four-year institutions. What professional development opportunities, assessment, and recognition and reward structures are right for your two-year institution? What would be the best reward structure in your setting?

The first step in developing any faculty advising development program is broad institutional commitment and administrative support. Who would be the people on your campus you will need to "buy in" to your plans in order to get them off the ground?

What other resources—human and budgetary—are necessary on your campus to build, assess, and sustain such a faculty advising program?

At your institution, would it be reasonable to think that quality advising can be used as a key element in the promotion, tenure, or merit equation?

What are the "training" issues that your faculty have expressed an interest in? Do they want a "Faculty Advising Handbook" that meets their informational, conceptual, and relational needs? If so, what is the best delivery model for it (paper, CD, web-based)? Who would be placed in charge of its development and upkeep?

Aside from the advising handbook, what other sorts of advising materials would be most beneficial to your faculty as they advise and mentor your students?

Data suggests that evaluation of faculty advisors is not a priority on most college campuses, yet it is a very effective way of assessing the quality of your faculty advising services and making improvements to them. If, for example, your institution does not currently employ a faculty evaluation instrument, you might want to think about adopting one that solicits students' thoughts on their advising contacts with their faculty advisors. What sorts of questions would elicit that information?

Would your faculty be interested in developing/willing to develop a self-assessment instrument or a peer evaluation form? If so, what might they want it to look like?

Because assessment is such a critical element of any program you develop, what other assessment tools would you consider to be appropriate/workable for your department/unit/college/university?

If your campus has a centralized advising center, what opportunities exist for cooperation and the exchange of information with faculty?

If on-going dialog about advising is one of your goals, what are the most effective strategies to keep the conversation alive and lively? Monthly brown bag lunches? Workshops both before and during the semester? Semi-annual faculty advising retreats? A monthly "Advising Matters" newsletter—electronic or paper?

As with any sweeping initiatives, there are bound to be those potentially pesky pitfalls in developing a faculty professional development program. What might they be at your institution? Would they be lurking in your college or university's budget profile? In deeply-rooted traditions or ways of doing things—old is good. New is bad? In the current curricular structure? In the personalities of those serving on your advising development committee? Once you have identified the pitfalls, discuss how they could best be overcome.

How much of what is holding your faculty back from being the most effective advisors is the fear of delivering incorrect information to their advisees? If this is the case, what are the best strategies for helping faculty to overcome their fears?

An important tool for your faculty advisors is the advising syllabus that includes the 3 Rs—the rules, rights, and responsibilities of both faculty and their advisees. What sorts of information would be appropriate for inclusion in such a syllabus on your campus?

Assuming that your institution does not yet have an advisor recognition or reward program, what suggestions might you have to get started in developing a such program? What strategies would be appropriate based on your financial resources or lack of such resources?